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Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples

Summary record of the 10th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 June 2006, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

1. *The agenda was adopted.*

Special Committee decision of 13 June 2005 concerning Puerto Rico (*continued*)

Hearing of petitioners (*continued*) (Aide-memoire 03/06 and Add.1 and 2)

2. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Rivera (Puertorriqueños unidos en Acción) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

3. **Mr. Rivera** (Puertorriqueños unidos en Acción) said that the violent acts recently committed by United States security forces in Puerto Rico, including the assassination of the independence leader Filiberto Ojeda Rios had been merely the latest phase in the systematic and grave violation of the most basic human rights of Puerto Ricans by the United States.

4. Any process of self-determination and decolonization must ensure respect for the human rights of Puerto Ricans and guarantee the liberation of Puerto Ricans imprisoned in the United States for activities relating to the island's struggle for independence. It should also include the participation of Puerto Ricans residing in the United States.

5. The United States had used its influence to keep the question of Puerto Rico off the agenda of the General Assembly, while using a variety of means to thwart the attempts of the people of Puerto Rico to assert their sovereign rights. It was time for the international community to give due priority to the question of Puerto Rico.

6. *Mr. Rivera withdrew.*

7. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Ms. Vélez-Mitchell (Primavida, Inc.) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

8. **Ms. Vélez-Mitchell** (Primavida, Inc.) said that the United States should be more mindful of the contribution made by Puerto Ricans to United States society and should be more appreciative of the island, its people and its culture.

9. *Ms. Vélez-Mitchell withdrew.*

10. *At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Arroyo (Young Professionals for Puerto Rico Democracy and Self-Determination) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

11. **Mr. Arroyo** (Young Professionals for Puerto Rico Democracy and Self-Determination) said that it was time for the United States Government to clarify the status options for Puerto Rico. The December 2005 report of the inter-agency Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status provided a framework for the completion of the decolonization process that had begun with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII).

12. The present Commonwealth system of self-government had represented progress in 1953, but had since become an anachronism. All political parties in Puerto Rico sought non-territorial status, including full democratic self-government. In order for the decolonization process to be completed, the current status of annexation and partial integration must be ended in favour of full integration, free association between nations, or independence as recognized under United States and international law.

13. Although it might be technically true that the United Nations was no longer responsible for the political status of Puerto Rico, it was important that United States citizens from Puerto Rico should prevent misleading information about the territory's status process from being disseminated in the Committee or anywhere else.

14. *Mr. Arroyo withdrew.*

15. **The Chairman** said that the statements of the petitioners had deepened the knowledge of Member States concerning new developments and perspectives regarding the political, constitutional and socio-economic evolution of Puerto Rico. He wished to highlight a number of issues that had emerged from those statements.

16. Many petitioners had referred to the possibility that the question of Puerto Rico might be taken up by the General Assembly and that the United Nations might send a visiting mission to the island. They had noted that Puerto Rico's capacity to participate in international organizations was limited, even though categories such as observer status or associate membership were enjoyed by other Territories.

17. Petitioners had raised the issue of the applicability of General Assembly resolution

1514 (XV) to Puerto Rico with respect to the right to self-determination and the relevance of Assembly resolution 1541 (XV), especially as it related to the options of free association and integration. They had also wondered about the implications of the 2005 inter-agency Task Force report defining Puerto Rico as an unincorporated territory, and had sought clarification from the administering Power as to whether the report's findings constituted a new policy, which differed from that presented to the United Nations in 1952.

18. A number of petitioners had wondered whether the rationale underlying General Assembly resolution 748 (VIII), which had removed Puerto Rico from the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, should be revisited, and others had referred to the various ways by which Puerto Rico could exercise its right to self-determination.

19. Various intergovernmental bodies had expressed support for a self-determination process for Puerto Rico, and petitioners had also recognized Puerto Rico's cultural affinity with the wider Latin American and Caribbean region. They had also questioned the political and economic implications of the applicability of federal law and jurisdiction to Puerto Rico. They had referred to the impact of the role of multinational corporations in the context of the ownership and control of the economy, as well as to the unfinished restoration of Vieques in the context of land use and ownership, and of the responsibility for the decontamination of the land.

20. Those issues were complex and deserving of due consideration by the Committee and by the United Nations as a whole. Although the Committee was not mandated to resolve them, it could make important observations on how to move forward. Petitioners' overwhelming call for the General Assembly to take up the issue of Puerto Rico's self-determination had been very clearly expressed.

21. Such a development would not be inconsistent with paragraph 6 of the resolution on the question of Puerto Rico adopted at the Committee's previous meeting. The matter should be given due consideration by the General Assembly so that the various issues raised could be clarified and so that the people of Puerto Rico could move forward in the exercise of their right to self-determination.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.